contigency plan, Air India would operate 41 flights per week with 4 aircraft with capacity of 11245 seats and Indian Airlines would operate 70 flights per week with 5 aircraft with capacity of 12880 seats.

VRS for AI employees

†2634. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved the Voluntary Retirement Scheme for the employees of Air India to reduce the number of employees;

(b) if so, the time period in which the said scheme is likely to be implemented;

(c) the number of applications expected from the employees for the said scheme; and

(d) the financial burden likely to be borne by the Air India due to this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government has approved the VRS for Air India employees subject .to the condition that the same shall not deviate in any manner from the DPE's existing guidelines on Gujarat pattern of VRS. All permanent and confirmed employees of the Company who are on Indian scales of pay and have completed 10 years of service in the Company or who have completed 40 years of age on the date of closure of the Scheme will be eligible except (i) employees in licensed categories 'such as Pilots, Flight Engineers, Aircraft Engineers; (ii) employees in technical & operational categories such as Technical officers, Simulator Maintenance Engineers, Service Engineers (Aircraft Non-Licenced), Aircraft Equipment Operators, etc.; (iii) employees on contract; (iv) employees who

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

are on 2-Year Leave without Pay/Allowances/PLI extendable upto 5 years; and (v) Government servants/others on deputation. The scheme is effective from February 24 to April 25, 2003 or till such time the Management deem fit on the basis of the response to the scheme. It is expected that about 1000 employees will avail of VRS under the scheme. The financial burden likely to be faced by Air India would be about Rs. 57 crores (approx.) for different categories.

Direct flights to the USA and Europe

2635. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India is planning to undertake a major fleet expansion by acquiring eight aircrafts on lease to operate direct flights to the USA and Europe from various destinations in our country;

(b) if so, whether Hon'ble Chief Minister of A. P. has requested the Centre to ensure that adequate number of flights by Air India from Hyderabad are planned to the USA and Europe while finalising the bilaterals with countries concerned as a very large number of professionals from Andhra Pradesh are working in the USA and Europe;

(c) if so, whether Government would agree to the request; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) Air India has dry leased 9 A310-300 aircraft and one B747-400 aircraft to undertake flights for growth as well as to replace its own old aircrafts like B747-200 and A300-B4. Air India is also in the process of dry leasing 10th and 11th A310 in 2003. Air India has introduced three flights a week from India to New York *via* Paris w.e.f. 3rd December, 2002. A fourth frequency has been added w.e.f. 30th March, 2003.